Praise of China and Russia

Reg. No. B3092

HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: K. G. MASHRUWALA

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SHRI PATIL'S APPREHENSIONS — III

Extent of Holding

Let us now examine the subject of 'economic holding'. It is a complicated subject, since what makes a holding economic depends upon various factors. If agriculture is to be pursued as an all year and full-time employment, sufficient unto itself without the assistance of any other income, it will mean one thing. If it is expected ordinarily to be supplemented by a subsidiary occupation it will mean another. Whether the subsidiary occupation is meant to give some income or to make for self-sufficiency will also make some difference. Then, the nature of the soil, irrigation facilities, regional climate, the kind of seeds sown, manure applied etc. must also be considered to determine what constitutes economic holding. It will be more appropriate, therefore, to consider the question not in the form of 'economic holding', but in that of 'unit area necessary for convenient and advantageous management by an individual agriculturist family'. Let me call it 'minimum family managed holding'. A genius like Dr. George Washington Carver might be able to earn a comfortable income from a plot of 30 feet by 30 feet i.e. 100 sq. yards. It would be 'economic holding' for him, but even for him it may not be a sufficient area for convenient cultivation. On the other hand, for a cultivator in the sandy desert of Rajasthan, or the mountainous regions of the Himalayas, even 50 acres of land might not be economically sufficient, and the owner would need the assistance of a secondary occupation to make his both ends meet. Yet it may be more than a conveniently manageable unit. Hence, the search of a fixed formula for 'economic holding' is rather vague. We might be able to succeed better in arriving at a reasonably agreed figure if we seek to determine the minimum area for a family managed holding — the family being taken as consisting of five members of whom one is an able-bodied whole-time worker, and the rest contribute in the aggregate at least an equal share of labour; in other words the total labour of two workers. If in addition to their own full-time labour, their efforts are supplemented now and then with the labour of a pair of bullocks and of co-operating neighbours or (circumstances allowing) paid labourers, it might make the cultivation more efficient or economically profitable; but even if they had to work without any such assistance, and only with a pick-axe and a shovel, the family should be able to manage that area. Every facility that the family might be able to get whether in the shape of fencing, manure, good seed, sufficient and timely rain or irrigation, improved implements, rotation of crops, security from pests and crop-destroying wandering animals, technical advice in agricultural operations, cure of crop diseases etc. would make the same area a better producer and economically more profitable, whether the family wants to sell its produce or consume it at home. Economic advantage depends upon these facilities and factors and not merely upon the extent of the land. The law of diminishing returns will probably apply more quickly with multiplication in the units of area, than with provision of other facilities.

If the approach suggested above is sound, I do not think that under our present circumstances — that is, having regard to the life, customs, traditions and actual socio-economic state of our agriculturists, — five acres of dry or one acre of wet land can be regarded by any one as too small a unit for convenient management by a family. As a matter of fact in the major part of India, a majority of holdings are so much smaller than that sought to be given by Vinoba, that Vinoba's distribution may well be regarded extravagant. As has been pointed out in one of D.M.'s letters, there are in U.P. individual holdings as small as .40 acre, and regarded by the cultivators as sufficient units. In a specially prepared note, Shri Bandhudas Sen of Gandhi Vichar Parishat, Wardha, quotes the following statistics of Indian holdings, from the *Agricultural Journal of India*, (1926):

Less than 1 acre	23%
1 — 5 acres	33%
5 — 10 acres	20%
Over 10 acres	24%

In Orissa, he points out, "nearly 26.7 per cent peasant families have less than one acre of land."

"In comparison with the average size of holdings", Shri Sen says, "it must be admitted that the principle of distribution of 5 acres of dry land or 1 acre of wet land per family is an improvement over the existing situation."

As said above the economic advantageousness of holding depends on various factors, the area being comparatively a minor one among

them. It has been repeatedly pointed out, and admitted by Shri Patil himself somewhere, that there are countries in the world and cultivators even in India, who take far more yield from holdings smaller than 5 acres of dry and 1 acre of wet land, than large-scale agriculturists. China and Japan are particularly mentioned as examples of small holdings. Hence the proposition that the small holdings are less economic than large ones requires, to put it mildly, to be thoroughly investigated. There are eminent agricultural experts who hold the opposite view.

So far as our country is concerned, I put it very softly when I say that there is no satisfactory data to assert that given equal advantages and aids small-scale holdings are definitely 'uneconomical', that is to say, yield proportionately less than large areas. No one will deny that there has to be some limit beyond which a holding cannot be advantageously reduced. At the same time, there is a limit beyond which holdings should not expand, in the interest of both the soil and the people. If proper cultivation methods are followed, there is a greater likelihood of its turning out that the limit of profitable holding is reached at a much lower area than is supposed.

The fact is that though agriculture has always been the most important activity of our country and the mainstay of not only of our people but also of the State, it has been the most neglected subject for centuries. Although, every State big or small — every zamindar, *inamdar*, feudal chief, religious institution, moneylender and proprietor of large areas of land, has drawn his or its income preponderantly from agriculture, during the last four hundred years at least, it does not appear that any of them took any interest in the development of agriculture — whether by way of improvement of soil, seed and implements, or of instruction of the actual cultivator. The cultivator has somehow derived and preserved some skill by imitating his immediate predecessors, and has rather forgotten a part of the traditional knowledge than added to it. The revenue policy and laws relating to transfer of land of the British Government both in the Zamindari and the Ryotwari areas have been most ruinous to agriculture. Their trade and commerce policy and administrative convenience has been uniformly directed towards the suppression of small cultivators. Though moneylending existed in India for scores of centuries before the British rule, hardly, so far as I know, a moneylender could become an *owner* of land. The laws of transfer of land enacted by the British enabled moneylenders to own large areas of lands without even an iota of knowledge about agriculture. The moneylender converted into an owner of land did not take even that interest in the improvement of agriculture, which an *inamdar*, a *jaghirdar* or *deshpande* might take. When he began to feel interested in agriculture, he began to produce money-crops and city fruits. There has been no atmosphere, no encouragement, no opportunity to the actual producer of food-crops to make improvements in agriculture. Pressure of various kinds has certainly been put upon him. But it has been always in order further to impoverish him. No pressure has been exerted on him to shed his ignorance, expensive social customs, fashions, vices etc. or to make him acquire better knowledge of his occupation and the science pertaining to it. Many a clever farmer has been either drawn away from agriculture or reduced to an unskilled labourer in the course of a few generations, but very few made it more efficient than their ancestors. Intensive agriculture has never been seriously tried in an appreciable measure except perhaps during this century in canal irrigated areas. Where it has been so done, I do not think that it has been proved that small holdings yield less than large ones.

The uneconomic nature of small holdings on the ground of area alone does not stand proved. And if we go by the experience of Japan and other countries where intensive agriculture has been made successful, small-scale holding seems to have more points in its favour than the other one.

(To be continued)

Wardha, 3-6-'52 K. G. MASHRUWALA

THE BOMBAY TENANCY ACT — II

We saw in the previous article how under the pretext of cultivating land personally the landlord is enabled under Sec. 34 to dispossess a tenant of the land which he might have been cultivating for generations past and ruin his living. A still greater evil that has resulted from this is that the landlord takes a higher rent than the maximum fixed under the Act by circumventing the law. It has become a widespread evil. It is done by the landlord nominally dispossessing his tenant under the pretext of cultivating personally and then again leasing it (in fact, though not in form) to either the same or another tenant on a higher rate of rent, say one-half of the total yield in place of one-fourth or one-third. The land is entered in the land records of the Government as that cultivated personally, the tenant being coerced to declare that he was only a servant of the landlord. For fear of being left without any land whatever to till, the tenant gives in writing to the landlord, "I have willingly handed over the possession of the leased land." Of course, a plausible plea can be made that no law or Government can help people who want to deliberately sleep over their rights. But if this evil is widespread, it also behoves law-makers to provide for its remedy. With this and other objects in view I suggest the following changes in the Bombay Tenancy Act.

The definition of "Agriculturist" should be suitably amended by providing that agriculture should be the main source of his livelihood, his annual non-agricultural income being not greater than one-third of his agricultural income or Rs 500/- whichever figure is higher.

The Bombay Agricultural Debts Relief Act has stipulated this amount as the limit of non-agricultural income for an agriculturist debtor.

A clause should also be added to the definition of "to cultivate personally", to the effect that the agriculturist's permanent residence

should not be at a distance of more than 3 miles from the land which he 'cultivates personally'. This amendment will prevent absentee landlords living at distant places from abusing the law. The definition of "Agriculturist" and "To cultivate personally" will therefore read somewhat as follows:

"Agriculturist" means a person who cultivates land personally, whose main source of livelihood is agriculture and whose annual non-agricultural income does not exceed one-third of his agricultural income or Rs 500/-, whichever figure is higher.

"To cultivate personally" means to cultivate on one's own account,

(a) by one's own labour, or

(b) by the labour of any member of one's family, or

(c) by servants on wages payable in cash or kind but not in crop share, or by hired labour under one's personal supervision or the personal supervision of any member of one's family.

Explanation

In order 'to cultivate personally' it is necessary that the permanent residence of the agriculturist should be situate within three miles of his holding.

It is also not fair to keep a tenant in constant fear of being dispossessed of his land. A time limit should be fixed within which an owner may claim back the land for personal cultivation: say, within two years after the amendment of the law.

Sec. 14 (1) (a) of the Act provides, that if a tenant has failed to pay or deposit rent in any year, within 15 days from the dates mentioned in the sub-clauses, his tenancy will be liable to be terminated and the landlord shall be entitled to evict the tenant. This is a very harsh provision. Perhaps, to mitigate this harshness a partial remedy has been provided in Section 25. But it is submitted that right to evict a tenant for failure to pay rent must not be allowed at all. The proviso to Sec. 25 must also be deleted. In the Kheda and the Bardoli campaigns our main contention on behalf of the agriculturists was that the Government could not confiscate the land of a *khatedar* merely on account of his failure to pay assessment. At that time Gandhiji said that if for a few rupees of land-tax, even if a *bigha* of land was confiscated his struggle against the Government would continue. At the end of the campaign the Government had to restore the confiscated lands to their original *khatedars*. The same principle must be applied as between a tenant and his landowner. The landlord can recover his rent and no more than that from the other property of the tenant.

Sec. 34 provides that the landlord shall not be entitled to terminate the tenancy of a protected tenant if he (landlord) has been cultivating personally other land to the extent of 50 acres or more at the date of the notice. If the land which is being cultivated personally is less than 50 acres the right of the landlord to terminate the tenancy of the protected tenant and to take possession of the land leased to him shall be limited to such area as will be sufficient to make up the area of the land which he has been cultivating personally to the extent of 50 acres. In the case of an undivided Hindu family which consists of more than one branch, the right will be limited to the extent of 50 acres per branch of the family subject to a maximum of a total area of 200 acres, irrespective of the fact that the number of branches of such family are more than four. I suggest that this limit should be reduced to 30 and 120 acres respectively. This can be done by a notification under Sec. 36.

Sec. 32 of the Act provides for certain information relating to land. I suggest that the duty of giving full details of land possessed by a landlord as also about the branches of his family, should be cast on the landlord himself. The burden of proof relating to matters mentioned in Sec. 34 should also be thrown upon him. A proviso should also be inserted in Sec. 34 to the effect that a tenant cannot be deprived of his land, if his holding would thereby be reduced to less than five acres. A landlord may claim land only to the extent of the excess over five acres that being the minimum which should be left with the tenant for his cultivation.

The facility that exists to the landlord to pay land-tax in two instalments should also be extended to the tenant for paying his rent to the landlord. And it should be made obligatory on the landlord to give tenant a receipt for every payment of rent in full or part.

There is a custom of *gharjamai* in the Surat District, in which the father of a bride gives some land to his son-in-law for his maintenance. In such cases sons-in-law should not be treated as sub-tenants.

Sec. 32 gives a right to the protected tenant to purchase land under certain limits from his landlord. Its price has to be determined after taking into consideration the factors to be taken into consideration in fixing the reasonable rent under Sec. 12(3). One more factor should be added to them, namely the original price paid by the landlord and the returns received by him since his purchase so far. Possibly, this may be regarded as covered by Sec. 12(3)(f), but its specific mention should be made to remove any doubt.

In certain places the Mamlatdar has been empowered to dispose of cases arising under the Act. But he is overworked and consequently there is constant delay in awarding justice to the litigants. I suggest that the power to dispose of these cases should be assigned to the Agricultural Lands Tribunals referred to in Sec. 67 and pleaders must not be allowed to appear on either side.

If these amendments are introduced in the Act, I believe considerable relief and protection will be given to true agriculturists, among whom tenants must certainly be included. This does not, of course, end the rights of the owners to receive rent on their land, though in my opinion this right to share the fruits of the honest toil of the labourer deserves to be seriously re-examined. But in this article I am not discussing any revolutionary change in the concept of ownership rights.

(Translated from Gujarati) NARHARI PARIKH

HARIJAN

June 14 1952

PRAISE OF CHINA AND RUSSIA

Shri J. C. Kumarappa and other friends recently paid brief visits to China and Russia. They have returned with great admiration for Communist achievements, and have been narrating them before Indian audiences in a manner which makes young mouths (especially) water and young minds impatient to bring about a similar revolution in India.

Throughout history India had had no quarrel with either Russia or China. With China, the relations have always been positively friendly. So there can be no reason with us to be unwilling to give the Russian and the Chinese Governments credit for whatever benefits they might have conferred on the poor of their respective countries. On the principle that a country gets no better government than what its people deserve, perhaps U.S.S.R. and the Chinese Republic are the proper forms of Government for their country in their present situation. Hence, the mere mention of the word 'Communism' need not scare one. But I confess that I have taken these recent praises with some discount. A few weeks' Government-planned tour through 15 or 20 places in countries much larger than India is too small an experience to praise or denounce a regime with confidence. We have been told that China does not follow the Russian pattern of economic order, but has devised her own in keeping with her history, traditions and environments, and based on "decentralization" and "small holdings". The last two words are almost like pet *mantras* in the Sarvodaya economics, and give an additional reason to young workers to fall in love with the Chinese Republic and to feel disaffected towards our own.

I have carried all along a feeling that the present economic policy in China is not the final picture of the Communist policy in China. It is only a preliminary stage. Russia herself had followed a similar policy in the beginning. But her aim has always been to achieve centralization and State Capitalism both in agriculture and industries. Who can say that China will not also do the same?

But that too need not terrify one. After all centralization, decentralization, private Capitalism, State Capitalism, large-scale industries, small-scale industries and the like are matters of secondary importance. The thing of first importance is the all-round physical, intellectual, moral and spiritual development, welfare and freedom of every being, beginning from the poorest and the most down-trodden man in the country. It is conceivable that at different stages, a different economic pattern may be needed for this purpose and there is nothing morally wrong in suitably employing any of these patterns or making a mixture of them. It does not matter much even if the process appears in the immediate present a 'drift', 'aimless', 'haphazard' method, devoid of logic and consistency. Provided the effort gives expression to the inner yearning of the last man, it will make itself good in the end. Hence, when Sarvodaya lays emphasis on decentralization, handicrafts (village industries), self-sufficiency, and even boycott of some mechanized processes, let it be understood both by ourselves as well as its critics that these principles and items are not made a religion of. They are put forth as what appears to us the most practical and eventually the swiftest method of bringing about the all-round moral, social and economic regeneration of the nation *in the present context of Indian conditions.*

Thus it is not the specific economic and administrative policy of either Russia or China — centralized, mechanized, even though it is or aims ultimately to be — that need make one deprecate it. But the defect, which creates in a man like me a great aversion to Communism, is its thoroughly untruthful, violent and untrustworthy career. It is power politics in the most abject form. Attainment and consolidation of political power seems to be its only fixed principle. Every thing else, every act and every move, is a part of 'tactics' for gaining and consolidating power. There is no rule of conduct which is sacred and inviolable. You cannot put faith on anything the Communists might even solemnly assert. And as to respect for life, it is a superstitious sentiment in their opinion. Their amoral code makes even their good men unreliable.

An example of this has been recently given in a bulletin of the British Information Services of India. It is reproduced below:

> Writing under the heading "The Road to Power", *The Times* comments on the rise of the Communist Party from underground to domination in Hungary.
>
> After a review of the handling of events by M. Rakosi, Deputy Prime Minister, the newspaper says: "As early as the land reform in the spring of 1945, M. Rakosi claims, his party used these tactics of division: 'Whenever it was possible we started by putting forward modest claims, thus preventing the enemy from joining and mobilizing forces against us. Then we increased demands, and used whenever possible, temporary forms. For instance, first we demanded only government control over the banks, later we demanded nationalization of the three largest banks.'
>
> "The truth is that the democratic state run by a progressive coalition was itself a 'temporary form'; and the process by which first the Smallholders' Party and then the Social Democratic Party were first invited to collaborate, then confused, divided and brought into discredit, and in the end suppressed when they had lost the strength to resist further, is a matter of history now expounded with great lucidity by its principal engineer (in a lecture to his party now published by the Hungarian *Social Review*)."
>
> ***The Times*** **continues: "M. Rakosi describes one stage in it as 'salami tactics', by which slices of the**

Smallholders' Party were cut away, and its strength worn down even while the Smallholders' leader was the Prime Minister, and M. Rakosi his deputy. The first great demagogic stroke, the redistribution of land into small family holdings, was a 'temporary form', for M. Rakosi relates how, in 1948, having won the working people over, his party could raise the question of collective large-scale farming.

"Within four years the regime, which set out on the road to power by distributing the land, had gone so far along the road that it could safely broach the subject of bringing the land back into 'collective hands'. By that time the rivals for power had been removed, and the 'people's democracy as a variety of the dictatorship of the proletariat' established."

The Times concludes: "there could be no clearer warning than this cynical confession to the countries that still keep their freedom."

Perhaps it will be retorted that a pot may not call the kettle black. This is not the point here. The British like all other belligerent and ambitious nations have their lies and false propaganda and their own deeds might also be shown to be equally bad. The point is whether having regard to the circumstances mentioned in this bulletin, the present Chinese policy may not be regarded just a temporary and transitional stage in the final plan, which will be the same as in Russia. Shri Kumarappa and others have assumed that China would always retain its present policy, and it is that that has attracted them. This is doubtful.

As to their capacity for ruthless destruction of life and suppression of those who are allowed to live what shall we compare it with? They combine both the Nazi method and perhaps our own past treatment of those whom we reduced to the state of untouchables or *adivasis* through centuries. As to ourselves, our conscience has been awakened against our misdeeds, and we aim to make amends for our sins. The Communist countries are pursuing this career with all its modern and up-to-date technique. How can we say that the objectives of Communism and Gandhism are similar, or that Communism should be established in India by non-violent methods? Gandhiji so far as my information goes, would have preferred absence of State altogether. If a State had to be suffered, it could be only a well-regulated perfect democracy. With a totalitarian and dictatorial regime, whether of the Fascist or the Communist type, he had no love whatever. And Communism is inseparable from totalitarian and dictatorial regime.

After the above was written I noticed an article "Revolution and National Genius" by Acharya Kripalani in the *Vigil* of 31st May. To such readers as have an access to *Vigil* I commend his article.

Wardha, 1-6-'52 K. G. MASHRUWALA

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ARTICLE WITHDRAWN

I regret owing to inadvertence and misunderstanding a draft prepared by D. M. was published by me as Leader in *Harijan* on 31st May under the title "Shri Vinoba's Reply to Shri Patil". It transpires that Vinoba had not authorized its publication. Though D. M. did write to me in a covering letter that it was merely his own draft, I understood thereby only that I could make suitable changes in its language. As it had the appearance of having recapitulated Vinoba's ideas in his own words, I did not suspect Vinoba had disapproved of it.

But Vinoba writes that he did not approve of it for two reasons: one, Shri Patil's statement was only a correction of his misreported speech at Sevapuri, having nothing new in it. But the way the reply was drafted showed as if Shri Patil was opposed to *Bhoodan* movement, which is not a fact. He is an active supporter of the movement, having actually donated his own lands. The object of his criticism was to make *Bhoodan-Yajna* more successful and advantageous.

Secondly, the question of economic holding was an academic one. There was no hurry to reply to it. Vinoba believes that Shri Patil did well in initiating this discussion. People ask Vinoba questions thereon and he prefers to answer them whenever raised. That helps clarification of ideas and propagation of the mission.

The result is that the article is withdrawn, for the simple reason that it is not what it purports to be, namely "Shri Vinoba's Reply to Shri Patil".

I notice that this article has been reproduced or commented upon by some papers. Both D. M. and I regret that they and the readers have been inadvertently misled by us.

Wardha, 7-6-'52 K. G. MASHRUWALA

Bharatan Kumarappa on Prohibition

I wonder if the attention of the readers of *Harijan* has been drawn to the excellent series of articles which Dr. Bharatan Kumarappa has been lately contributing to a number of English newspapers. He makes a dispassionate study of the problem of drink and the duty of the State therein from various angles. They ought to be studied by all Governments, legislators and social workers. I hope when the series is over they will be published along with translations. In his latest article he has shown how Prohibition had succeeded even in U.S., but had been abandoned under the pressure of vested interests, which virtually control the political machine there.

Wardha, 2-6-'52 K. G. M.

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NOTES

Drink Unnecessary in Austria Too

Mrs Frances Standenath (Savitribehn), a loyal follower of Gandhiji in Austria in the course of a letter (7th May '52) writes:

"Very much surprised but I am, when I read of divergences of opinions in India, whether there should be prohibition or abolition of prohibition. In India there should be no question about it. Even in our country, though very cold during almost 8 months, there are also people—though not even (i.e. too) many — which don't drink. Unnecessary to say that also I myself, though I had since the last (many) years no money for heating and though I put not a single time a fire in my room during the long cold winter with only 3 or 4 degrees Celsius (i.e. below 40°F) in my room — but to take a drop of alcoholic drinks does not come in my mind.

"Yesterday, I read "Health Minister" in *Harijan*. And I shook my head and must say to myself: It is really no joke! In every country the same! The letter and your answer could be written in every country and in every profession and business or vocation."

21-5-'52 K. G. M.

Bhoodan Receipts of the Year

From the Shivarampalli Sarvodaya Conference (April 1951) to the Sevapuri Conference (19th April, 1952) in the areas toured by Shri Vinoba, namely parts of Hyderabad (Telangana), Madhya Pradesh, Madhya Bharat, Rajasthan, Vindhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, 4,936 owners donated 1,02,363 acres of land.

Since Sevapuri, till the end of May about 2,500 persons from various parts of India have donated more than 70,000 acres. Thus the total figure of donations comes to 1,75,000 acres at least, the quota of U.P. alone being 1,32,416 acres upto 29th May. They include besides the States enumerated above, some other States or provinces also. Their exact details are not as yet available, and reports from some like Maharashtra, Saurashtra, Bihar etc. are still awaited. In round numbers (for all except U.P.) the province-wise figures from which reports have been received are as under:

	Acres	
Telangana (Hyderabad)	15,000	
Madhya Pradesh	7,000	
Vindhya Pradesh	1,000	
Rajasthan	1,000	
Madhya Bharat	2,000	
Delhi	1,000	
Gujarat	2,500	
Orissa	1,000	
Madras	7,000	
	37,500	upto
Uttar Pradesh	1,32,416	29th May.
Extra	5,100	before 31st May.
Total	1,75,016	

Some of the U.P. districts have nearly completed or exceeded the quota fixed for them. Originally, a quota of 10,000 acres had been fixed for each district. But since the size of the districts is very much irregular, a change had to be made in their quotas. Thus the quota for Bundelkhand division has been fixed at 20,000 acres, per district; its Hamirpur district has already donated 19,000 and promised 8,000 more. Vinoba expects a lakh acres from the Banda district. Pilibhit has given 12,500 and Kanpur 13,000 their quotas being 10,000 acres each. Kanpur has also promised to gift 2,000 pairs of oxen.

It is also now a part of the Land-Gifts Mission to request donors to donate wells, oxen, agricultural implements, seeds etc. The people are responding to these appeals.

LAXMINARAYAN BHARTIYA

Camp: Sevapuri (Chitrakut)
(From Hindi)

U.P. Government Note in Aid of Bhoodan

[The Uttar Pradesh Government has issued the following instructions to its Land Reforms Commissioner as preliminary to the enactment of a law for regularizing *Bhoodan*. The Governments of Hyderabad, Madhya Pradesh, and some other States also have issued helpful instructions to their officers. It is hoped the remaining States will also render similar help. — K. G. M.]

Dated, Lucknow, May 29, 1952

No. 737R/I-A — 217/52

Sir,

I am directed to address you on the questions relating to the *Bhumidan* Movement started by Acharya Vinoba Bhave in connection with which he is touring the countryside in this State. The question of bringing out an enactment for the purposes of regularizing the gifts in favour of Acharyaji and the letting of land by him is under active consideration of Government. It will, however, take some time. For the present it is considered necessary that the District Officers may be requested to depute *patwaris* and/or *kanungos* of the circle to the villages which are visited by Acharyaji and his party. They should remain present at the time when *Dans* are made and the land is let out by Acharyaji and his co-workers. It is recognized that the *patwaris* or *kanungos* would not be able to make any entries about the transactions in the record of rights so long as the present law is in existence. But they could unobjectionably make entries about the *dān* and the lettings in their diaries. They should note the name of the donor, the area and situation and if possible the khasra (khalsa?) nos. of the land donated, the date on which donation has been made, and any special conditions or terms agreed upon between the donors and the donees about the land. In case of letting too, they should note the date of letting, the name of lessee, the area let out and the terms or condition of the leases. They should also try to obtain the signatures of the donors, the lessees and of any member of Acharyaji's party whom Acharyaji may nominate for this purpose. This record, if maintained properly, will be of considerable help if and when it is possible to regularize these proceedings. I am to request you to issue necessary orders to all the District Officers.

Yours faithfully,
(Sd.) Zahurul Hasan,
Secretary

HARIJAN DISABILITIES IN TAMILNAD

Swami Anand Tirth, Regional Officer in charge of the Harijan Sevak Sangh's intensive scheme for the removal of the civil disabilities of Harijans in the Southern Range, gives from Melur (Tamilnad) an account which is abridged below :

"It is now nine months * since the Harijan Sevak Sangh started its intensive work for the removal of the social disabilities of the Harijans in the Melur Taluk of Mathurai District. Several disabilities affecting the use of tea-shops, haircutting saloons, wells, tanks, *chavadis* etc. have been brought to light during this period. The few instances cited below show how deep-rooted the prejudice against Harijans still is in our society, in spite of the strenuous work that has gone on for over twenty-five years and in spite of legislative enactments like the Civil Disabilities Removal Act which came into force five years ago.

"In Parli, near Natham, a Harijan youth who refused to take tea in a coconut shell and insisted on being served in a glass tumbler was kicked and shoed on the head by a caste-Hindu, who was subsequently convicted and fined Rs 10/- by the Sub-Magistrate of Melur.

"At Kelavalvoo, I went with two Harijan boys to a tea-shop. A group of people drove away the boys who were with me and threatened to assault me. I had to take shelter in a near-by school till the President of the Panchayat Board intervened and persuaded the angry crowd to leave.

In Kottagudi, a village barber who refused haircut to a Harijan boy was charged by the Police and convicted by the Sub-Magistrate. But later, the Harijans were summoned by the caste-Hindus to the *chavadi* and warned against using the service of this barber, on pain of a collective fine being imposed on them.

"In Kidaripatti, the Harijans are not allowed to take the corpses of their dead through the public footpath, or to ride through the village streets on bicycles.

The Use of Ooranis (Public Wells)

"At Kelavalvoo, the Harijans take water from a dirty pond in which men bathe and cattle are washed. When we encouraged the Harijans to go to the *oorani* (protected water tank) they were abused and chased away by the caste-Hindus. There is a police station in this village, but the police here are indifferent towards the disabilities of the Harijans. In Attukulam, the caste-Hindus dirtied a public well with night-soil, and in Tiruvedur, a caste-Hindu assaulted a Harijan woman who was pregnant and broke her utensils in an attempt to prevent her from using the public well. In the latter case the culprit was convicted by the Sub-Magistrate to pay a fine of Rs 15/- and thereafter the Harijans of the village have been freely making use of the *oorani*. In Nundikovilpatti, only three furlongs from the Taluk office, Melur, Harijans were not being allowed to use the public well till very recently, when police intervention had to be sought.

"In Thekkitheru, Harijans who entered the Manthai *chavadi*, during a public meeting were stoned and chased away. In Ettimangalam, to show their displeasure against the Harijans entering the village *chavadi*, the caste-Hindus destroyed the paddy seedlings that the Harijans had raised in Government *peromboke* lands.

Attitude of Village Officials

"In Navinipatti, about two miles from Melur, the Village Munsif himself is alleged to have objected to the Harijans wearing decent dress on the day of the Pongal festival and made two Harijan youths remove their shirts and upper cloth, prostrate on the ground and go away in their loin cloth.

"The most painful oppression has been in Mankulam, about ten miles from Mathural City, where the Village Munsif himself took a hostile attitude. Two Harijan youths went to a tea-shop, and as they were denied admission, they complained to the Police. For this, one of them was tied to a pillar and mercilessly beaten up by a caste-Hindu boy under instructions from the elders. Another Harijan was assaulted with a knife by a servant of the Village Munsif. The Harijans were denied employment and subjected to a social boycott for taking water from the public *oorani*. Shopkeepers refused to sell provisions to them and they were forced to starve for two days. The situation improved only after the intervention of the Revenue Divisional Officer. Recently two Harijans and I were brutally attacked by a band of caste-Hindus and beaten with firewood cudgels for having bathed in the tank and gone into a coffee club in front of the *chavadi*. We were admitted and treated in the Government Hospital in Mathurai. I sustained a fracture in the right foot due to which I cannot use the right leg and walk. Sixteen persons including the Village Munsif have been charged by the Police for rioting. But it is said that some Congressmen are trying for a compromise because some of their relatives are involved in this. These friends are also known to have approached the authorities in this connection.

"One feels very dejected and disheartened at the attitude of the caste-Hindus towards the Harijans, especially when one remembers that this sad state of affairs is persisting even after 25 years of the work initiated by Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhiji, who won Swaraj for us, desired the end of all inequality in our society. He wanted us to identify ourselves with the downtrodden and to regard the Harijans as our blood-brothers. The Revenue and Police authorities can do a lot to remove the disabilities of the Harijans. But it is sad to have to say that in some places, the Police are apathetic and even Village Munsifs who are expected to give wide publicity to the Civil Disabilities Removal Act and enforce it have become the reactionary forces standing in the way of the Harijans exercising their elementary rights. Let the caste-Hindus, Congressmen and the Government realize that the mission of Gandhiji will not be fulfilled till the curse of untouchability is not wiped out from every nook and corner of our country." (Melur, 22-2-'52).

The above is a harrowing tale. That such persecution and intolerance of social equality can go on even after the adoption of a democratic Constitution, and almost side by side with a General Election based on political equality and adult suffrage is very significant. It proves again, if proof was necessary, that a clause in the Constitution can become effective only if it is accompanied with an intensive effort to bring about a revolution in the outlook and the lives of the people, and if the officers who are charged with the task of ensuring conformity to the Constitution are awakened enough not to tolerate or connive at breaches of the law. If social workers, upholders of law and the people are all unenlightened, inactive, and even perverse, what can a mere clause in the Constitution or a law in accordance with it do? If the salt loseth its flavour, wherewith shall it be salted? The instances quoted by the correspondent should make us intensify our effort to end this blot on humanity.

R. V.

* Over a year now. — *Ed.*

A SOCIETY OF BROTHERS

[I am glad to share with the readers of *Harijan* the following letter received by me from a Seeker of Truth in far off South America. It shows how earnest men all over the world are moved by similar ideals and objects. It also shows how Vinoba's mission has attracted the world, and with what expectations the world looks to India for a right lead. Is there any *ashram* or other brotherhood in India which answers fully to the type of Brotherhood described by M. Art Rosenblum? — J. D.]

Dear Jivanji Desai,

I am very grateful for your letter of August 2, (in reply to mine of June 30), and I am sorry that I have not answered it sooner. Along with my work in the community, I do not have very much time for reading and writing, and much of the time I have is spent in reading the *Harijan*. I have found many interesting and worthwhile articles therein and the work of Vinoba is of special interest. That so many people in India are alive to the need of the poor of their own country and the world is something that I had not previously realized. It is a thing which could be of importance to many people throughout the world.

* * *

The Soevdad Fraternal Hutteriana (or the Society of Brothers as we are usually called) is not a charity and it is not an organization for social work or for the service of the society as your *ashrams* appear to be.

We do not believe that there is any value or purpose in trying to help or improve the existing order of the society in the world.

We believe that Capitalist (and also Bolshevist) society is based on the self-interest of the individual (or the State) and not on a real seeking after the will of God.

The aim and purpose of the Society of Brothers is a radical one. It is our wish to make a new beginning and to form a totally new society which is based not on our will, but on the will of God.

We believe that here in Primoneve (and in the Wheathill Bruderhof in England, and some other places) the Sermon on the Mount is being *expressed* in actual life and that, to the best of our ability, we are showing a better way to the erring society.

We believe that the teachings of Jesus require men to live together in true brotherhood and love for one another. For this reason we have all surrendered our private property so that it may be shared with all who wish to come and live with us. Our door is open to all men regardless of rich or poor, white or black, German, English, or Indian.

In addition to giving up our money and property, we are giving *ourselves* that is, our life and our strength and our bodies and our minds; all must be surrendered to God that a new order may be established on this earth. Each of us works, not for himself, but for the society, and the society as a whole, cares for the need of its members. Each serves according to his ability and receives according to his need, *so that no money is used between us*.

In this way we seek to live and work together, with all who come to us, in the true spirit of brotherhood and love, and we give a clear witness for peace and non-violence. A member of the society will not go to the war and each of us would rather go to the prison or even die than take part in evil such as war.

These times are times of growing unrest throughout the world, and many people are seeking for a new way of life. A terrible catastrophe is approaching our whole civilization — atomic warfare. All over the world there are people who see this catastrophe approaching and many have come to realize that it is being brought about by their own selfishness and greed for money.

For this reason and in fulfilment of Jesus' command we desire to send brothers out on mission to all parts of the world in which people are seeking the will of God. At present we have brothers on mission tasks in the United States, Europe, and South America, and our greatest need is for more people to come to us so that we may enlarge our mission task and call more men and women to this life of brotherhood. It is even my hope that some will come to us from India.

As for China, I will write to Prof. Alexander as soon as possible and I hope that he will help us to contact the Chinese brothers.

I thank you once again for your help and interest and I remain,

Jan. 27, 1952
Society of Brothers,
Primanera, alto,
Paragvay, S. America

Yours sincerely,
ART ROSENBLUM

CONTENTS PAGE

SHRI PATIL'S APPREHENSIONS — III	.. K. G. Mashruwala	129
THE BOMBAY TENANCY ACT — II	.. Narhari Parikh	130
PRAISE OF CHINA & RUSSIA	.. K. G. Mashruwala	132
ARTICLE WITHDRAWN	.. K. G. Mashruwala	133
HARIJAN DISABILITIES IN TAMILNAD	.. R. V.	135
A SOCIETY OF BROTHERS	.. Art Rosenblum	136
NOTES:		
BHARATAN KUMARAPPA ON PROHIBITION	.. K. G. M.	133
DRINK UNNECESSARY IN AUSTRIA TOO	.. K. G. M.	134
BHOODAN RECEIPTS OF THE YEAR	.. Laxminarayan Bhartiya	134
U. P. GOVERNMENT NOTE IN AID OF BHOODAN	.. Zahurul Hasan	134

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